

New Zealand strengthens military alliance with US

Tom Peters
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New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters and Defence Minister Judith Collins visited the United States this week for talks to further integrate New Zealand into the expanding US-led military alliance in the Indo-Pacific region.

Even as the US and its allies escalate the war against Russia over Ukraine, and double down on supporting Israel's genocidal war against Gaza, the Biden administration is preparing a third war front against the main US economic rival, China. US imperialism is cementing alliances with countries across the Indo-Pacific region, seeking to encircle China.

The New Zealand ministers visited Washington at the same time as Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who met with President Joe Biden to announce a major expansion of the US-Japan Security Treaty, aimed at achieving "seamless" integration of the two countries' militaries. Japan is set to participate in the AUKUS (Australia, UK, US) military alliance, and Biden announced that the US, Japan and Australia would create a "networked system of air, missile, and defense architecture."

On April 11, Peters and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken released a joint declaration stating that New Zealand and the US are "working more closely than ever" on "shared challenges," including the US-NATO war against Russia. New Zealand troops are in Britain providing training for Ukrainian conscripts, who are serving as cannon fodder in this brutal NATO-provoked war that has already killed hundreds of thousands of people.

The statement highlighted New Zealand's long-standing membership in the US-led Five Eyes global intelligence network, and its status as one of NATO's four "Indo-Pacific partners" (along with Australia, Japan and South Korea). It said that "the most

challenging strategic environment in decades requires us to do more together."

Peters and Blinken endorsed the increased US military presence in the Pacific region, saying there were "powerful reasons" for New Zealand to engage with AUKUS and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (a quasi-alliance between the US, Japan, Australia and India).

The declaration said the "historic partnership" between the US and New Zealand was based on "shared values and interests" such as the "rule of law, democracy, human rights."

In reality, the lawlessness and barbarism of both governments can be seen in their support for the mass murder and ethnic cleansing carried out by the Israeli regime. The normalisation of genocide by all the imperialist powers must be taken as a warning: the destruction of Gaza, as horrific as it is, will be repeated on a far greater scale as the US charges toward war against nuclear-armed powers.

New Zealand's right-wing National Party-led government is positioning itself to join Pillar II of AUKUS, which will mean enhanced sharing of military technology with the US, Australia and UK.

In addition, Prime Minister Christopher Luxon told the Australian Associated Press this week that his government had "reasserted our belief" in the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS) and was "deeply committed" to it. In 1985, the US suspended its obligations to New Zealand under the 1951 treaty in response to New Zealand's anti-nuclear laws, which prevented US warships from entering the country's waters. The US never reveals whether or not its navy vessels or warplanes are nuclear-armed.

Luxon said the nuclear-free policy would remain in

place, despite his commitment to reviving ANZUS and support for AUKUS, which includes an agreement for the US to supply Australia with nuclear-powered attack submarines. Asked by the *Australian* newspaper whether the AUKUS submarines would be welcome at NZ ports, Luxon explicitly left the door open. “That’s something we’ll look at,” he said.

Conscious of widespread anti-war sentiment in the population, opposition Labour Party leader Chris Hipkins told reporters on Tuesday that “ANZUS is not an active part of our foreign policy and hasn’t been for a long time.” He said New Zealand should not “pick one side or the other” in “a conflict between China and the US.”

Another former Labour Party prime minister, Helen Clark, said the Luxon government’s pronouncements on ANZUS were “profoundly undemocratic,” as it was not part of the National Party’s campaign in last year’s election.

These statements are hypocritical posturing. Since the end of World War II, successive governments have strengthened the alliance with the US in order to ensure US support for New Zealand capitalism’s own predatory neo-colonial dominance over much of the South Pacific.

Clark’s 1999-2008 Labour government played a key role in boosting the alliance by sending troops to join America’s illegal wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2016, notwithstanding their “nuclear-free” posturing, Labour and the Greens welcomed a US warship visit to New Zealand for the first time since the 1980s.

The 2017-2023 Labour government backed the US military build-up against China and the US-NATO war in Ukraine. The Ardern-Hipkins government also left the door open to New Zealand joining AUKUS Pillar II.

Labour’s then defence minister, Andrew Little, stated last August that the military had to be properly equipped in case it was “called on” to fight in the South China Sea. If it had been re-elected last October, Labour would be following the same trajectory as the current government.

Having covered up the increasing danger of global war for most of the past decade-and-a-half, New Zealand’s political and media establishment is now demanding that the country join AUKUS and other US-led alliances, and build up the military, as part of the

stampede to World War III.

The US-linked intelligence agencies and the corporate media are playing their part in stoking hysteria with allegations that China hacked into New Zealand’s parliamentary computer network, and claims that New Zealanders being employed as trainers by the Chinese military represents a security “threat.”

In an April 12 article entitled “Full-scale war in Europe and Asia now a real possibility,” the *New Zealand Herald’s* Matthew Hooton—one of the media’s most vociferous defenders of Israel’s genocide in Gaza—called for doubling the defence budget from just over 1 to 2 percent. Labour and National both agree on this.

Hooton noted that politicians and military leaders in France, Germany and the UK are considering reintroducing conscription for war against Russia, and declared that if New Zealand wanted to remain “part of the Western defence network, that comes with a price—first in money and treasure, and perhaps later in blood.”

Six months of global protests against the Gaza genocide have demonstrated that there is mass opposition to war. But in order to stop this atrocity and to halt the plans of the ruling class for a catastrophic world war, workers and young people must turn to a socialist program and fight to mobilise the working class globally to put an end to the source of war: the capitalist and imperialist system.

To discuss the way forward, we urge readers to register to attend the International Youth and Students for Social Equality’s webinar on Tuesday, April 16 at 6 p.m. (NZ time): “The crisis of political perspective of the Gaza protests .”



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